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The Hear Share App: Keeping Hearing Aid Wearers and Caregivers Connected

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- Hello everyone and welcome to today's topic, the Hear Share App, Keeping Hearing Aid Wearers and Caregivers Connected. I'm your host for today's event, Dr. Michele Hurley, and I'm a senior education and training audiologist with Starkey. Now let's talk a little bit about what our outcomes are for today. I am expecting that you will be able to identify the health and wellness information that can be shared via the app with a caregiver from Hear Share. Participants are also going to be able to describe the setup process for the Hear Share app specifically. And finally, we'll be able to identify two benefits of the Hear Share app for patient and caregiver. When we think about our experiences as hearing healthcare providers with our patients, we know that they come to see us to hear better.

I mean, that certainly makes sense and we know that those needs are slightly different from one individual to the next. We know that, not only are hearing challenges a reason for people to come see us, but we know that those also can manifest as impacts to our overall health and wellness as well. And so very often our role as that hearing healthcare provider is not only helping that individual hear better but also live better as well. When we think about hearing health, we know that it is very intertwined with other, you know, different health challenges. And when we think about providing better hearing, that is going to certainly enhance that individual's lives in many different facets.

But it also has a great impact on our overall health as well. We think about seniors in today's world, and that can be our most common, you know, patients that we see, the patients that we see today really have changed quite a bit from say, the World War II and depression era individuals. Today's senior is typically pretty optimistic about their overall health, and they have a real focus on wanting to stay healthy throughout the extent of their lives and really doing everything they can to accomplish that. So, you know, we see that there's a lot of positives in terms of today's seniors in terms of how they, you know, think about their overall health and, you know, the purpose of their

lives and how they're going to do everything that they can do really to maintain both their physical and their mental health.

And while we know that, you know, they're very focused on the optimism about their overall health, we also know that, you know, with aging that there tends to be a direct correlation between hearing loss and many of those other conditions that we find that individuals in this age group may tend to have. Things like diabetes obviously balance issues, but we also see cardiovascular disease and hypertension as a part of that as well. So very often the individuals that you see in your office for, you know, better hearing are also exhibiting some of these other conditions. And in fact, sometimes, you know, their need for treatment in these other areas can sort of supersede the importance of seeking better hearing.

So it helps, I think, if we really think of these as all being very intertwined. One of those conditions, of course, is our balance. And, you know, that is an area of importance for us because of our balance system residing in our ears. But we know that there has been a wealth of information and evidence that really relates, you know, hearing and the loss of hearing to, you know, increasing our impact or potential for falls. We know that with every 10 DB of measured hearing loss, that increased incidents of falls occurs, and that we also see that increase of incidents occur as we age. And so those both kind of go hand in hand that untreated hearing loss and aging are going to put our patients that we typically see at much higher risk.

We know that there is a lot of information about the number of times that individuals are seen, you know, in the emergency room as a result of the fall. And, you know, the fact that that's every 11 seconds. I think many of us have known somebody either a family member or a patient that has a fall related injury and the, you know, catastrophe that that can create for them and for their loved ones. I also know that there's a lot of, you know, tie-ins with hearing loss and our brain health, and there's been a lot of

information that we've started to see about that over the last several years. And individuals with hearing loss tend to see a much faster decline of their cognitive health than their peers that have normal hearing.

And very often we see that, you know, the tie-in with hearing loss and social isolation of, you know, leading to much more concerning diagnoses like depression. And so, you know, hearing loss going untreated can definitely have an impact on our brain health. We know that this is a significant concern for individuals today, and especially the boomers that are, you know, really coming into their own as, you know, the aging population and in need of our services. And you know, this, you know, concern about dementia and Alzheimer's is a key concern for a vast majority of these individuals. And in fact, many of them would put off their retirement if they thought that that continuous of working is going to help with their overall brain health.

And we see a lot of information, of course, in the media about, you know, supplements that you can take and, you know, doing puzzles and learning languages. And so this is something that is very top of mind for many individuals in today's world. We see that tie-in with hearing loss and all of these brain health types of, you know, facets. You know, when, you know, when we lose our ability to communicate effectively as a result of that hearing loss, very often that leads us to kind of pull back and isolate ourselves and that can spiral into depression. And so we see that this becomes kind of a cascade of symptoms and concerns that all result from, you know, the issues of that hearing loss.

In fact, this is such much of a concern, and we saw this become such a huge concern during the course of the pandemic when so many individuals, especially the seniors were isolated. Our own U.S. Surgeon General, Dr. Vivek Murthy, indicates that loneliness is considered a health crisis in today's world. And again, we see a lot of information about this in the media. When we think about loneliness, you know, it can

often start at a fairly young age. And of course that increases as we move in through that aging process. And one of the statistics that I think is so kind of frightening is the impact of loneliness being as harmful as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.

So, you know, while this seems like a very silent kind of concern, it is something that can have a dramatic impact on our health and often lead to much more, you know, significant levels of, you know, mental health. When we think about depression, we know that that hearing loss and that social isolation that we see as a result of that can lead to depression and depressive types of symptoms. And I think it's really interesting to look at this study information and see that really that highest risk category is an individual with moderate trouble hearing. And we think about the people that come into our practices that they tend to be in that category very often. You know, they now notice that their hearing loss is, you know, worrisome enough that they need to do something about it.

And this is also an area that is of great concern, we think of depressive symptoms. As we think about those types of symptoms that, you know, we maybe be, you should be on alert for with our patients and maybe think about discussing those concerns with them or with the loved ones that they bring with them. And we can see that, you know, there's things that sometimes we may witness, you know, in our patients are they kind of, you know, restless or are they a little lethargic? You know, do they have difficulty concentrating when we're working with them? Do they describe difficulty sleeping and changes in their lives that, you know, might be attributable to these types of things?

It's definitely not in our scope of practice to diagnose these, but they may be conversations that we can have and especially, you know, guide them to the right, you know, resources. And certainly better hearing is a great way to work with that as well. We've been waiting a long time for really evidence to support the correlation between untreated hearing loss and cognitive decline in those concerns. And we finally achieved

that earlier this year with the ACHIEVE Study. This is a longitudinal study that's been looking at, you know, hearing intervention over a period of time and the positive impact that that could have on loneliness of, you know, the social networks that are so critical to our mental health and reducing cognitive decline.

And we finally have that evidence and information that supports what we've been, you know, thinking all along. And that's really, I think, very valuable for us really to be shouting from the rooftops to those prospective patients that are coming in through our doors. So when we think about the impact that this has on us as healthcare providers, I think it's really important that we, you know, not only view ourselves as delivering, you know, hearing healthcare services, but also, you know, we're impacting that overall wellness for those patients that seek our assistance as well. And the reason why is because, you know, the patients that you see, many are going to have high blood pressure, loneliness, diabetes, depression, and be at risk of falls.

And so we're going to see those individuals coming through our doors that may be dealing with one or many of these issues. And again, you know, we have the resources now with technology to be able to measure some of these things, whether it's through hearing aids or through other methods that, you know, we can play a key role in overall wellness in addition to better hearing. And that's really something that's very top of mind in the medical community in general. You know, their focus really has started to shift towards that more holistic strategy with delivering medical care. And I think that that, you know, also filters down to us as health hearing healthcare professionals as well.

We need to not just be looking at that disease of, you know, hearing loss, but really looking at that whole person and how all of those facets of their lives can be approved via better hearing. And many of the tools that are at our disposal with technology in today's world. So as you think about your patients, you know, are you really thinking

about, you know, all areas of that patient, you know, that really holistic view of them? And as I mentioned, we do have the tools with our technology in many cases to be able to go beyond looking at hearing data and also looking at social engagement and physical activity and a lot of those features that are really important in that overall holistic strategy with our patients.

One of the things that I think is really valuable when we think about our patients is, you know, did they come alone to that appointment? And hopefully not. That's something that we really need to be working on is, you know, making this something that is a team approach and that's not only the patient and us as the provider, as a team member, but also that loved one or caregiver. They can become a really valuable part of that team because they're with this individual, you know, much more of the time than we have the opportunity to be. And very often they see things a little bit differently and their input can be really valuable. And there's a lot of really good data that shows that very often there's kind of a discrepancy between patient and family when it comes to, you know, that view of the improvement that we anticipate with better hearing.

Very often that that family member or caregiver has a little bit more of a positive kind of viewpoint of that than the patient. And so that can be really valuable when we think about how they look at, you know, how better hearing has improved relationships at home and at work for their loved one as a result of choosing better hearing and you know, the fact that it's having impact in other areas of their lives. So that again, makes this person really, really valuable because you know, sometimes, the patient may see things as glass half empty, that loved one very often takes that more positive glass half full approach and can be that that cheerleader in that home environment for us.

One of the topics that we hear a lot about in today's world is age in place. And so many seniors are really focused on that sort of discussion, but, a lot of times people really don't know how to accomplish that age in place strategy. And there's a really

great book by Joy Loveorde that I would highly encourage that you to investigate if this is something that you think would be valuable for you to learn more about from your patient's perspective. Or if you're dealing like myself with that from family members this is really important information. And when we think about caregiving and you know that aging in place phenomenon, it's not just the individual, the senior that has concerns about that.

It's very often the caregiver and their overall health has become very much of a public health concern. Because when we think about how they are impacted as, you know, the population ages and you know that, you know, demographic of individuals that need caregiving expands and that great desire for that aging in place, you know, it's gonna put a lot of burden on many individuals that are gonna fall into that category and it impacts their lives as well. We know that, you know, typical caregivers are often family members and very often they are female, but that's not always the case. Most often they're kind of in that sandwich generation, they're raising their families, they're dealing with their loved ones that are older, that are needing that care and they're also probably working.

And that means that, you know, all of this becomes, you know, over time in their already full-time jobs. You know, we think about, you know, caregiving it may be just making sure that you know they're okay in their home, but sometimes that, you know, evolves into playing a key role in providing medical and care services that may have previously been taken care of by nursing home individuals. We've seen, especially with the pandemic that shift towards people being long distance caregivers and you know, we need to be thinking about how technology can play a role in that. So when we think about technology and what, you know, position that it may have in caregiving, especially as we think about aging in place and better hearing, there was a great study that was done by the "U.

S. News & World Report" earlier this year about aging in place in that role of technology. And we can see that the devices that made it easiest to accomplish that were things that, you know, very often we're interacting with, you know, technologies such as, you know, healthables and hearables and hearing aids. And so, you know, it's nice to see that that technology is very positive for these individuals and that they felt that it made them feel more comfortable with their independence, feel safer and healthier. So a lot of positives with using these technologies. And as we think about that from our perspective, you know, as hearing providers, you know, we need to be looking at, you know, hearing aids as a solution to not only hearing but also that larger scope of that more holistic strategy.

And I think it's important that we demonstrate to the patient and the caregiver that these solutions are available and how they can improve their lives. And with that in mind, thinking about technologies that we have and at Starkey we have an app that we've developed called Hear Share that is designed to support the health and wellness of that, you know, patient for the caregiver and using connectivity as that conduit. So what's in it for using a feature like Hear Share? When we think about it from the patient's perspective, it means that, you know, they're going to have a way for, you know, somebody to access that information, but yet to do that, you know, not in an intrusive manner, not being hovering helicopter caregiver.

It allows very often a patient to be able to have that independence longer and we know that they crave that with age in place. It also allows them to be able to really have a say in, you know, what's shared and we know that that's very important for their independence and allows them to ask for, or have input about support when it's needed or even desired. When we think about from the caregiver's perspective, what can a feature like Hear Share app perform? Well, it gives us, again that way to be informed but without hovering and being that helicopter person. To be able to get

notifications that may be very valuable on if their loved one fell or is in need of help in other ways or, you know, might need just a welfare call.

You know, it's convenient, it's something that can be accessed anywhere, anytime and that can give us a lot of peace of mind that we can always have access to that information again without maybe having to make that call or hover unnecessarily. When we think about it from a hearing care provider, what's in it for us? Well I think that any tool like this can increase patient satisfaction and reduce return rates 'cause we're increasing the value of this technology and that's I think especially important when we think about the avenues that are available in today's world. With over the counter and online technology, being able to maximize the value of the resources that we have to offer through our practices and through our practices only is highly valuable.

So Hear Share is an app that's actually been on the market for a number of years and it was previously referred to as Thrive Care, but we changed the name to Hear Care to you know, really incorporate more of the technologies that are now supported by the Hear Share app. And that includes our Genesis AI technology, Evolve AI and Livio Edge AI technologies in the Starkey family. When we think about what we can examine through the Hear Share app, we can see, you know, whether those devices are connected or not. And that can be really, you know, important when we think about a welfare check has Mom been wearing her hearing aids? We can see how those hearing aids are being utilized, but from the hearing perspective and also from those social engagement types of pieces.

And we can also take a look at some more broad health and wellness types of information as well. And there's notifications that can allow us to easily be notified if some of those goals for some of those features have not been met. So let's take a quick look at how we can set this very simple app up. Well it all starts in the My Starkey app that the patient is going to be utilizing with their products, so this is where

we're going to begin. We are going to, when we open up the app, go to that Health Area and in the wellness area, we'll be able to drill down a little bit more deeply from that page into where we can actually set up these features.

So the additional setup under this health tab allows us to be able to establish things like our fall alert, which is not necessarily something we'll talk about today, but it is something that can be viewable through the Hear Share app. And so this is where we can set up our caregivers for our Hear Share functionality. We can then navigate into inviting caregivers and we can also specify, as you can see what we wanna share as the hearing aid where I can control what that loved one or caregiver's going to see about my experiences. We can send off that invite and we do that with a, you know, an email. And then we can see once that invite has been sent that you know, we've got confirmation that that is now out for their approval.

We wanna view and see whether our caregivers have accepted that role for us. We can actually go into the more area of the My Starkey app, go into App Settings. We can view the Hear Share information and we can see in this case that we have a, you know, active caregiver and we also have one that's pending and waiting that approval from that messaging. Now if they, you know, don't respond, there's no time limit on that, but this is an easy way for us to see that maybe we need to send them another gentle reminder. Now from the caregiver's perspective, they can access the Hear Share app from either the Apple App store or the Google Play Store.

And it is a free download through either of those resources. From the Hear Share app, once they've downloaded that, they're going to go and accept that invitation. And part of that invitation included a code that will then be implemented as we see there in that middle screenshot. And then we'll see what our hearing aid wearer has chosen to share with us in terms of information and we can confirm all of that detail. In terms of simple navigation, this app is very easy to navigate. It has three simple screens. When we look

at the home screen, we're going to have that information about our, you know, loved one that we are caregiving for. And so we can see the details about the features that have been shared, you know, by that patient with us.

We can see that we'll also have the opportunity for notifications and so we can establish that as the caregiver so we can be notified about various facets of the hearing aid where it's experiences so that we'll have more information about, you know, if a fall has occurred, you know, how they've been wearing the devices, have they gotten their physical activity goals met. You know, all of this of course is dependent on how they have allowed information to be shared with us. But it can be really valuable. When we think about being, you know, notified, you know, if a fall has happened, you know, this is not part of our fall alert technology in terms of that active alert, but this notification may be very valuable if you're the child that lives, you know, five states away.

That may be a good conversation that you can have when you see that, that notification pops up with your sibling, who is that more active participant and a contact for that fall alert. So it's a great way to encourage those conversations and, you know, know that maybe I need to reach out to a family member or to my loved one wearing the hearing aids to learn more about why they've not been wearing one aid in particular or you know, why they haven't gotten up and moved as much as we expect. That again can be that really good welfare call to make. The more area the final screen allows us really to set up the device and kind of configure it for us as the caregiver, which of course is a really simple process 'cause most of it is related to that information that's coming in.

But we can personalize that screen, change our passwords and those kinds of things from the more area. So you can see it's a really simple, you know, app from the caregiver's perspective. And the good news is for your hearing aid wearer in the Starkey technologies that we discussed, that they can have an unlimited number of

caregivers and those caregivers can be anywhere in the world and they would've access to the same information that has been chosen to be shared specifically with them. So, you know, it's something that I think is a really valuable resource for those Starkey hearing aid wearer and a really interesting concept as we think about, you know, this push towards aging in place and being able to really tap into that with hearing health and overall wellness resources that are now available through our Starkey technologies.

So before we wrap up, just a couple of tips and tricks with this technology. From the patient's perspective, they are the one that's inviting those caregivers so, they really control that and they can, you know, as I mentioned, control, they can invite more than one caregiver. So there can be an unlimited number and I think that's valuable when we think about, you know, children, grandchildren, loved ones who may be outside of that familiar relationship that are so important in caregiving. The app does need to be open, you know, or at least running in the background. So it doesn't have to be front and foremost, but that My Starkey app will need to be running for that data to be shared with the the Hear Share app on the caregiver's part.

And the patient does need to be signed into the cloud and connected to the internet for all of this to take place. When we think about the caregiver's perspective, they must accept that invite. You know, they can refresh the Hear Share app, you know, to get new information uploaded, but they don't have to have the app up and running. They can just access it whenever they want to be able to access that information. It's important to remember as I mentioned with fall detection, that this is not the alert system, that is a separate entity, but it is a notification that is possible when that has been established for the patient by their My Starkey app, so that someone who is a caregiver would be notified even if they're not necessarily one of the active contacts for that fall detection feature.

You know, you don't have to be, you know, assigned into the cloud, but you do need to be able to, as a caregiver have, you know, access to that data. So if you're in a place where you've got poor Wi-Fi or cellular, that could certainly impact that sharing of that information. As we think about this Hear Share app, it was really designed to provide that assistance for the wearers of the Genesis AI, the Evolve AI, and the Livio Edge AI Starkey technologies to be able to, you know, have that more independent lifestyle that we know so many individuals crave these days and to be able to share information about their hearing aid use, activities and safety information as they choose and with their designated caregivers.

So this is a really great resource that I think is really important, again, as we think about the, you know, focus on aging in place and allowing our loved ones to be able to be independent as long as possible, I think this is a great way to share information with a really easy resource for both patient and caregiver to be able to interact with. So I wanna thank you all so much for joining me about this topic. I think this is a really valuable one in today's world and I look forward to answering any questions about this topic and I look forward to seeing you again at another Starkey event in the not too distant future.

So thank you all so much. We're at the end of the course. Happy to answer any questions, but you're free to exit the room at any time as well.